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THE BOATRIDE

LEIGH CHILCOTE PRESTON

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THE BOATRIDE

BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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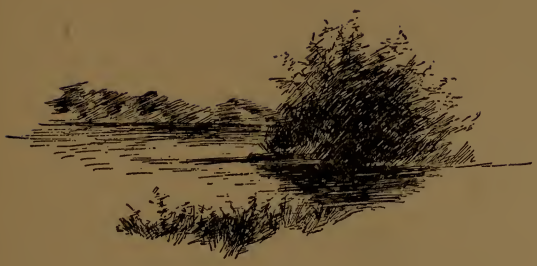


I.

The current's slow ebb scarcely stirred the calm river
To forward its slumberous stream through the course
Which sinuously wound through a hill studded valley
Toward the ocean's grey tide, from its cool, sylvan source.

II.

The spirit of Night held its wand o'er the river
And mantled in sable its placid expanse,
Till the full-orbed moon spread its sails in the ether
And Luna, its mistress, quelled gloom with her glance.

III.

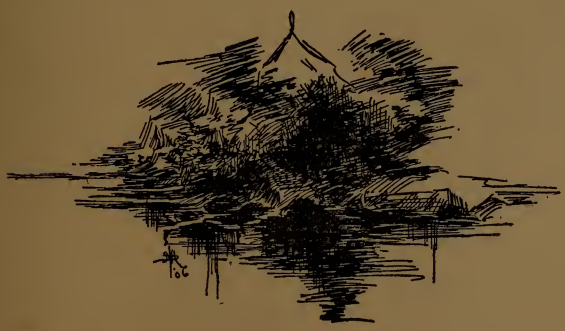
My bark drifted, aimless, upon the still water.
I cared not through what devious course it might go;
For Avis, the sweetest and loveliest of beings,
Was snugly ensconced in the Water Nymph's bow.

IV.

She trailed one white hand on the Water's warm
bosom.
She tapped its soft face with the idle, blunt oar.
The eddies, like ripples of low cadenced laughter,
Diffused it with dimples from boatside to shore.

V.

The willows hung low o'er the edge of the current,
The shadows, 'neath shelter, inviting to hide.
The frogs in full chorus sang songs in the marshes.
A nightingale's anthem was trilled o'er the tide.



VI.

It seemed as if all that was loathsome in nature
In slumber's repose was enwrapped for the night;
While the beauties, the harmonies, nature's pure blendings
Were marshalled in tranquil array to delight.

VII.

Avis, the mistress of all true and tender;
Avis, possessor of beauty's proud charm;
Avis, kindhearted, noble and generous—
It was mine to protect her from all that could harm.

VIII.

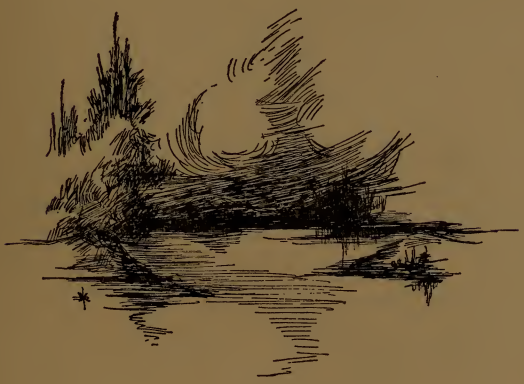
I had thought oft before that my wooings she slighted;
That I could not impress my fond love on her heart:
That, should I pour forth nectared love from its fountain,
She would bid me arise and forever depart.

IX.

But as she sat there, bathed in silvery radiance
Which Luna shed o'er her, there stole from her eyes
Such a gleam of love light that I straightway did fathom
The depths of her soul and beheld my great prize.

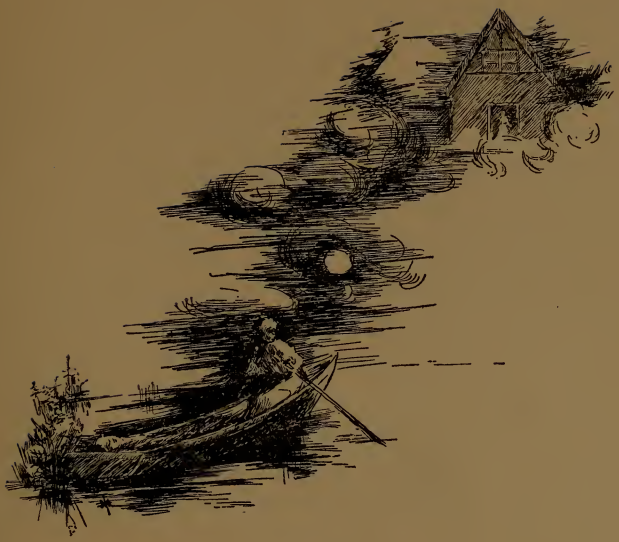
X.

I thought I would speak of the love which possessed me,
Since no longer my heart's deep affection she spurned;
But the spell of the moment bade me pause and delight in
The new found belief of affection returned.



XI.

The moon mounted high in its arc of the heavens.
We heeded not time in its swift, onward sweep.
The Water Nymph glided along on the current.
Avis plashed with the oar—Nature lulled me to sleep.



XII.

I dreamed of a home on the bank of the river
Where I was content to while life's years away.
That home was ideal in its every conception,
For Avis ruled o'er it with love sceptered sway.

XIII.

When next I awoke the bark had departed
And river and Luna and Avis had fled.
A pall of dense darkness was hung in my chamber,
Enshrouding all objects which stood by my bed.

XIV.

The hoot of an owl echoed far in the woodland;
The bay of a dog, weird and dismal, did sound.
The harmonies, now, seemed banished by Nature;
The uncouth and unpleasant now seemed to abound.

XV.

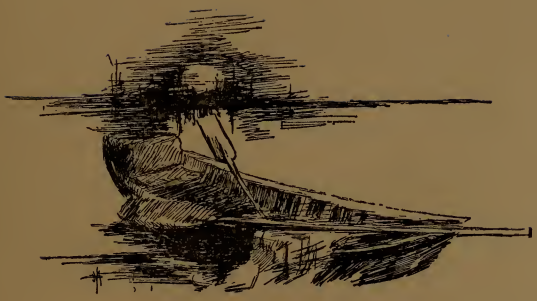
It was only a dream, the boatride and gladness;
A play of the mind, unreal as the home
On the bank of the river, ruled o'er by fair Avis—
Through what remote fields will the mind in dreams roam.

XVI.

How oft when awake will the nightingale's carol
Give place to the hoot of a night banished owl:
How seldom in life are our highest hopes granted;
How often the pure meets defeat from the foul.

XVII.

I will not despair, for the good is the factor
That wins the most plaudits after the fray.
Who knows but that Avis may yield to entreaty
And again grant the boon which my waking stole 'way.



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